RITCHIE BLACKMORE

PURPLE: THEIR

'I suppose we'll see

DEEP PURPLE'S new album "Machine Head" comes to you courtesy of the Rolling Stones' redoubtable studio manager Ian Stewart who saved their famous mobile recording studio from the flames of Switzerland's Montreux Casino when Frank Zappa was performing there and someone had the bright idea of firing a flare gun into the rafters.

"If it hadn't been for 'Stu's' prompt action in getting the Mobile out from underneath the stage where they were recording, it would have gone up with the Mother's equipment and we would have had nothing to record our album on," said Ritchie Blackmore.

"The fire was really quite spectacular with flames reaching over 200 feet into the air. When it started Zappa walked calmly to the front of the stage and announced: 'There is absolutely no need to panic — just keep cool and leave in an orderly fashion,' then he threw his guitar away and raced off the stage!

"We were actually going to record 'Machine Head' in the Casino but after that we decided to try a hotel. The first time it was insane — we had cable leads up to all the rooms and around 4 a.m. in the morning I was dubbing on guitar and there was 400 watts coming out the windows and bouncing about the mountain tops. Then the police arrived with loud shouts of 'Imbeciles' and we were moved out.

"Eventually we found a place that was prepared to put up with us but it was the same amazing scene. Cables running into all the rooms and recording out of four different rooms on the top floor — the residents couldn't believe it when they saw all the equipment.

"There were really quite amazing scenes with me playing guitar in the corridor, Ian putting on drums two doors down and Jon in another playing organ.

"During playbacks I remember having to go through half a dozen doors down a fire escape at the back of the hotel, across the courtyard where it was snowning at the time and into the Mobile.

"Despite all the complications I feel 'Machine Head' is a vastly superior album to 'Fireball' which I really didn't like apart from the title track and hardly ever played after we had finished it.

"This album was done over a far lengthier period and we were all a great deal happier with the material and more relaxed."

In many ways Purple are victims of their own success. While struggling to find an early direction they created their own monster with "In Rock" and have had their feet firmly embedded in the cement ever since.

"The public and the critics now expect one thing of the group and that is hard rock all the way in spite of the fact that they obviously have considerable individual talents within the group who are capable of evolving in many different directions.

Because success is a very difficult thing to put down once you've picked it up and perhaps because they do not feel disposed to start all the hard work again, Purple are quite obviously a musical compromise.

They have found a formula that works and they are getting all they can out of it — they are very definitely the best at what they do but that is seldom enough for a musician like Ritchie or Jon Lord who want to be the best and what they like to do.

In some ways "Machine Head" might seem something of Freudian slip to those who believe Deep Purple are merely a well oiled rock machine themselves. Ritchie is quietly objective about those kind of accusations and pointed out a few home thruths.

"If you mean by 'formula music' that we start together and end together I suppose we could be said to have a formula," he said. "But we are certainly not as contrived as groups like Yes, for example, whom I feel work out every note. There are very few spontaneous guitarists for very obvious reasons.

"I suppose Jeff Beck is one of the few but with the inevitable result that you go to see him one night and he is brilliant and the next night he is a shambles. Hendrix was about the only exception but even he used to lose the people he was playing with — you can even hear Mitch struggling to keep up with his changes on tempo and physically revving up when Jimi suddenly changes in mid-flow.

"I personally feel that for most groups to go on and play ad-lib is Death. In my opinion that was the cause of most of Traffic's problems. We work out most of our material but leave room for a jam and that way we keep a consistently high standard for live appearances."

How much longer will this marriage of convenience continue with Purple before the individuals feel their own musical frustrations insufferable.

"I suppose we'll see the year out if we're lucky," says Ritchie with typical frankness. "Although there is no doubt in my mind that Purple could change direction if they wanted to — I mean there are five amazing virtuosos in the group — Ian is technically a very good drummer, Roger a fine bass player, Jon can be the 'funkiest' organ player around, and Ian showed what he can do on 'Jesus Christ Superstar'.

"Personally I get very frustrated by the fact that whatever I write never really turns out as I intend it because it is interpreted by the group of necessity.

"I really envy ELP in a sense because I think they are really indulging in their own whims and they are playing music which is really for other musicians although Emerson manages to bridge the gap with an audience by sheer showmanship. I'm convinced that he will go down in musical history as a very important figure.

"At present I'm getting a small trio together under the working name of 'Baby Face' in order to do some blues things which I'm into — Ian Paice is helping me out and I've got another vocalist.

"The kind of voice I'm after is like Paul Rogers of Free — in my opinion he has the best voice in England at present — he's got Cocker's harshness, Stewart's bounce and Proby's adaptability. The guy is brilliant."

The fact remains Purple are an incredibly successful band so much so that in certain areas like Northern Germany their albums have virtually dominated the charts for a full year and they are regarded as some sort of extra

—Contd. on page 24.

VICTIMS OF OWN FAME

By KEITH ALTHAM

PURPLE on stage

the year out — if we're lucky

DEEP PURPLE

Contd. from page 7

terrestial phenomena.

"Our reputation is so huge out there that they almost expect us to fly when we go on stage," said Ritchie. "I think that was the reason we got an incredibly cool reception out there recently — they expect the impossible and now that the 'freebie' mentality is catching hold out there we are regarded by certain sections as 'capitalistic pigs ripping off their money!'

"Much of the reason for our exaggerated importance out there is that the discos are so powerful and our music is ideally suited to that purpose. They're picking up on the American drug thing out there and following fashions, festivals and so forth — working out on nervous energy. Ideally suited for our music — if they heard something like Pink Floyd they'd probably fall asleep.

"It's very strange because it's a totally different scene in the South where they are much more hospitable."

Finally we held an "In Memoriam" for the days when TV had something to offer in terms of rock music and "Oh Boy" set the standard while "Ready Steady Go" at least provided some sort of sympathy for the music it reflected.

"The only DJs I've got any time for are Kid Jensen and Alan Freeman," said Ritchie. "Even John Peel seems to have taken a turn for the worse — if it hadn't have been for Freeman and Jensen we would never have got a play on BBC or 208.

"Personally I like Jensen because you can always tell when he doesn't like something — he just says little or nothing and when he does he goes all the way. Also apart from Rosko the only DJ on the air who sounds as if he is alive and enjoying it is Jensen.

"To me 'Top of the Pops' is a necessary embarrassment. Necessary because it is the only programme on which you can promote a single on TV and an embarrassment because if you are any kind of musician you must feel a prick playing with an instrument which is not plugged in.

"I always do and I just shuffle through it with my head down. It must show — God knows how Bolan and Slade get through all that."